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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH
AIR POUCH

COPY NO 1 SERIES A

FROM : AMEMBASSY, CIUDAD TRUJILLO

214 DESP. NO.

OCT 31 1957

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

October 30, 1957 DATE

REF : Embtel. No. 163 of October 29, Embassy despatch No. 207 of October 28, 1957 and previous.

F750309-1184

For Dept. Use Only	ACTION	DEPT.
	ARA	R/MR IRC Eur/x P U/O U/OPR
	REC'D 11-6	INFO OTHER CIA USIA ARMY Navy AIR OSD

SUBJECT: Further Comments re Political Situation in Guatemala

Declassified 6/4/75 per Fimbres ARA FOIS-B-201

On Monday night, October 28, 1957, the reporting officer was visited by the Guatemalan national referred to in the referenced despatch. The following information was obtained during the conversation which followed:

The informant stated that army leaders, who had been closely associated with Armas in the liberation, were chagrined at him for relegating them to secondary positions in the Government after having placed him in power. They hoped to take a more active part in governmental affairs but were superseded by civilians. Communists aggravated this group hoping in this way to bring about the downfall of Armas by these non-Communists and pave the way for greater Communist influence in a future government.

The source further stated that about a month before the assassination of Castillo Armas, Armas had held a meeting with the leaders of the PUA. During this meeting Armas admitted that it was true that his MND Party had been infiltrated by Communists. Armas further stated that it had been his belief that he could make use of their services and win them over to his way of thinking, but that events had proven that he was mistaken in this belief and, as a result, he intended systematically to remove them from the government posts. The informant felt that as a result of this meeting Armas' fate was sealed inasmuch as too many Communists had been admitted to the ranks and that they had from that very moment, seriously plotted his downfall.

At the time of the assassination the informant was working in the Guatemalan Foreign Office. After calling attention to the peculiar circumstances that allowed the assassin to be assigned as a presidential guard after derogatory information in his background had become known, and the most unusual circumstances that Armas was unaccompanied at this time, except by his wife, the informant provided additional information pertaining to Skinner Klee. The source advised that Klee's activities did not correspond to his title, that Klee spent most of his time talking to young and middle-aged army officers of red orientation. Immediately following the assassination, the informant stated that a caucus of such officers was held in the offices of Skinner Klee

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and that thereafter Klee had virtually no time for accredited foreign diplomats. The source also pointed out that one of the main purposes of the visit of Skinner Klee to the Dominican Republic for the Presidential inauguration was to secure the recall of the then Dominican Ambassador to Guatemala, Dr. Soto. The reason behind this request was that Dr. Soto was too close to the truth concerning Castillo Armas' assassination.

The informant continued by stating that instead of following through on plans heretofore made for certain political activity in the PUA, it appeared expedient to leave the country for reasons of personal safety. In this connection the source was greatly upset as a result of the news that the Mother of Armas had gone into exile. The source indicated that Armas' Mother had never, from the very beginning, been satisfied with the account of her son's death and had wanted to ask the United States to investigate either overtly or covertly.

While discussing various individuals involved with the political affairs of Guatemala, the informant stated that the leader of the Revolutionary Party, Mendez, was a despicable, ambitious man who certainly could count for nothing in Guatemala's politics in the future--that he had supervised the murder of Colonel Aruca (?) at the Puente de Gloria some years back by sheer treachery.

The source advised that Ortiz would have been accepted by Guatemala had he or his party clarified the assassination of Castillo Armas before the election. The source indicated that Ortiz was the constant companion of the late President and was highly acceptable as a substitute if he had done what the people knew he could have done. Continuing, the informant listed several people as being very astute politicians who, if consulted and given support, possibly could still pull a deteriorating situation out of the fire. These are: Colonel Mencos, Colonel Lara and Dr. René BARRIENTOS Diaz, the latter being the most politically sophisticated man in the PUA. Two others listed were Lic. Juan CORDOVA Cerna and Lic. Carlos SALAZAR Gatica.

The informant went on to say that he was aware that the Guatemalan Ambassador to the Dominican Republic was associating himself constantly with the Peruvian Counselor, Cossio, the Mexican Secretary (unidentified), the Colombian Counselor, Hernando ARANGO, Cayama, the Venezuelan Secretary. In the opinion of the informant, these people are definitely leftist in orientation and are viewed with suspicion by the Diplomatic Corps in Ciudad Trujillo because of their leftist leanings.

In conclusion, the informant stated that Castillo Armas'

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private secretary, Margarita BRUNNI, is presently at the Guatemalan Consulate in New York and that probably she was in danger because of information which she possesses and which might give a valuable lead in the solution of the assassination of Castillo Armas.

Comment:

The reporting officer does not feel qualified to pass on the accuracy or validity of the informant's assertions and analysis, but is convinced of the personal sincerity of the informant.

Joseph S. Farland

cc: Amembassy Guatemala.

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